

Growers facing barren future

By Ilona Marchetta

THE loss of agricultural land in the south-west to development will redefine "fresh" food for Sydneysiders as more produce is sourced from overseas, an alliance of 40 Macarthur organisations has warned.

The alliance, known as the Macarthur Future Food Forum, is concerned with the economic, health and cultural implications of the State Government's drive to develop areas where many of Sydney's market gardeners are concentrated, such as Bringelly, Catherine Field and Leppington.

Alliance member Karin Vasquez, who is manager of Macarthur Diversity Services, said the Government had not yet answered questions about food security, food "miles" and cost.

"The link between food and communities is crucial," Ms Vasquez said.

"We're not saying don't build houses but we think there could be a better plan than the one at the moment, one that incorporates farm land in urban areas."

The forum will hold a workshop on Tuesday, September 15, at Campbelltown Civic Centre to gather information that will

inform the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance Summit in October.

The Sydney alliance is lobbying the Government for the development of a food policy for NSW.

University of Western Sydney associate professor Frances Parker, who specialises in rural development and agriculture, will speak at the Campbelltown event.

She said the development of Sydney's north-west and south-west areas had huge implications for Sydney's food supply and farming industry.

"The south-west is the single most important area in Australia

for Asian vegetable production because of Chinese growers in that area," she said. "They are on small family farms with intense production.

"We've already got a good model [for food supply], and we're about to lose it."

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